

RESEARCH PRESS NOTICE –

Getting into and staying in employment: Limiting long-term illness



9:30am Wednesday 11 January 2023

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has today published a research report looking at employment of those with limiting long-term illness or disabilities, as self-reported in the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

The first strand of this research aimed to identify drivers and quantify their impact on the likelihood of obtaining employment and staying in employment by 2011. The report shows that nearly a third (29.0%) of the 2001 household population aged 20 to 49 years with a limiting long-term illness was in employment, and of those who were in employment in 2001, nearly three-quarters (71.9%) were also in employment in 2011. From the characteristics considered, the main factors linked with staying in employment were general health (indication of severity of limiting long term illness), cars in the household and high educational qualifications.

Of those with a limiting illness and who were not in employment in 2001, around a quarter (24.4%) were in employment ten years later in 2011. Key drivers associated with moving into employment were having worked recently, looking for work (as opposed to being economically inactive) and having higher educational qualifications.

The second strand of this study assessed the difference in employment rate between those with (31.4%) and without a long-term health problem or disability (83.7%) of the household population aged 30 to 59 years in 2011. This difference of 52.3 percentage points (pps) is often referred to as the disability employment gap.

The disability employment gap was markedly lower when comparing within groups that volunteer (30.7pps), provide less than 20 hours (30.2pps) or 20 hours or more of unpaid care per week (30.8pps) and with degree-level qualifications (33.8pps).

A statistical modelling exercise found that general health explained around a quarter (25.7%) of the disability employment gap (13.4 out of the 52.3pps). Other important contributors were educational qualifications (6.4pps) and providing unpaid care (5.6pps). A remainder of 15.4pps (29.5%) of the disability employment gap could not be explained by this study's available factors.

This analysis was repeated for several self-reported health conditions. The employment gap ranged from 14.5pps for those reporting deafness or partial hearing loss, to 61.8pps for those with frequent periods of confusion or memory loss. The combination of general health, other health conditions and educational qualifications explained more than half of the employment gap for each condition except for those with an emotional, psychological or mental health condition (42.4%).

The research has been funded by the Economic & Social Research Council via ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK) and taken forward by NISRA, who together with the Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland (comprising the Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University), form the ADR Northern Ireland (ADR NI).

NISRA

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The full research report is available at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/disability-and-employment>
2. This study used Census data via the [Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study \(NILS\)](#), a large sample (28%) of the Northern Ireland population. The final dataset was anonymised prior to handover to the research team and did not contain identifiable individual level data. Access was only provided from within a controlled ‘secure environment’ and governed by strict protocols and procedures to ensure data confidentiality.
3. Official estimates of the [Disability Employment Gap](#) are derived from the Labour Force Survey, published by NISRA, and classified as a National Statistic. It provides estimates of the disability employment gap by age and sex only, and includes a comparison to equivalent figures for England, Scotland and Wales.
4. All media queries to Department of Finance Press Office at dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk. The Executive Information Service operates an out-of-hours service **for media enquiries only** between 1800hrs and 0800hrs Monday to Friday and at weekends and public holidays. The duty press officer can be contacted on 028 9037 8110.
5. ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK) is a partnership transforming the way researchers access the UK’s wealth of public sector data, to enable better informed policy decisions that improve people’s lives. ADR UK is made up of three national partnerships (ADR Scotland, ADR Wales, and ADR NI) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council which is part of the UK Research and Innovation.
6. This report was created within the Administrative Data Research Northern Ireland (ADR NI), a partnership between the Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland (ADRC NI), and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Together they support the acquisition, linking and analysis of administrative data sets, developing cutting-edge research to improve knowledge, policymaking and public service delivery.
7. Further information on this publication can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services at:

Telephone: +44 (0)300 200 7836

E-mail: info@nisra.gov.uk

Responsible statistician: Dr Jos IJpelaar